1: Federal W-5 (no date) 1986
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
Georgia

346

XVIIIa. Praise House at Sapelo

[following p. xxxii-x]

1: Federal W-5 (no date) 1986
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
Georgia

285 Near this section lives a Negro basketmaker * who claims that he is carrying on the tradition of his ancestors. He [462] stated that for generations the men of his family had en- [322] gaged in wood carving, basket making, and various phases [286] of weaving, and that the craft had been passed on from father to son.[70] He himself only makes baskets. White oak and bulrushes are selected as the material from which to [824] make the baskets and they are stitched with scrub palmetto. Those made of bulrushes are of the coil type (Plate IIc). A kind of thin rope is made from this grass which is then twisted around and around and sewn tightly together. The baskets made from white oak are plaited.[70] The types of baskets include hampers, flat clothes baskets, farm and shopping baskets, and the popular "fanner" which the Negro venders balance gracefully on their heads as they walk about the city, displaying a colorful array of merchandise.

322 Some years ago an unusual discovery was made near this district when a boy noticed a carved spoon ** lying on top of 412 a rubbish heap. This spoon (Plate IIa), A which has been 532 carefully preserved, is made of teak, and, judging from the dark polished surface of the wood and its general appearance, it might well be more than a century old. The bowl is shallow and about two by three inches and the whole length about seven inches. The most unusual feature of the spoon is the carved figure of the disproportionate little man forming the handle. Of particular interest are the flat cranium, the exaggerated ears, the gash-like mouth, the queerly shaped nose, the long dangling arms, and the short tapering legs which appear to be far too small for the rest of the body.[41b]

794 Near the Old Fort is the Peace Mission of Father Divine.† • 346 This comparatively new religious sect has an estimated mem-

* *John Haynes, 933 Wheaton Street.*
** *Property of Edward A. Sieg, 123 West Jones Street.*
† *Though the meetings of Father Divine are common to many parts of the United States, especially in the North, where white worshippers form a sizable proportion of the followers of Father Divine, this description ac-*

A, [See Categories 285 & 412, plate following p. xxxii-B--Analyst]

1: Federal W-5 (no date) 1986
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
Georgia

794 .346 bership of two million and a local membership of about fifty. There is nothing prepossessing about the small white building. The wooden floor is sprinkled with sawdust and except for the piano the only furniture is several roughly built wooden benches. The walls of the mission are hung with placards bearing inscriptions, of which the following are a few: "Peace—the Kingdom of Heaven is not meat and drink, but joy, peace and good will," "Peace and Good Will to the World," "Peace, Father Divine is God, Salutation is Peace."

794 At about eight o'clock in the evening members begin straggling in, two or three at a time. They are dressed soberly, with a noticeable lack of bright colors and ornamentation of any description, as one of the precepts of the cult is the sacrifice of all worldly possessions. Upon joining the church they must surrender everything of material value to Father Divine. The old life is a thing of the past. The convert must accept new habits, new names, and an entirely new scheme of existence.

794 793 The ardor of followers is not dampened by the fact that their leader has never been known to visit the Savannah branch. They claim that he is always present spiritually and can in this manner accomplish his miracles. At the (796 meeting a major part of the service is given over to a number of testimonials, presented by many of those present. One by one the converts intone their devotion to Father Divine * and vividly recount what he has done for them.

794 796 A stout Negro woman bearing the name of Sister Patience

curately portrays the House as it was found in this community. For this reason it was thought well to include it.

** Father Divine is said to have been born George Baker on a Hutchinson Island rice plantation near Savannah about sixty years ago. Sometime in the late 1890's it appears that he opened a meeting house in the Negro section of the Old Fort, calling himself "The Son of Righteousness." His activities in the community abruptly ceased when, after some trouble with the authorities, he fled from Savannah to escape a gang of whites who aimed to make him prove himself the reincarnation of Christ by walking on the Savannah River.*

Arriving in Baltimore, Maryland, he joined a religious sect headed by

SAPELO ISLAND

829 "Doze folks could fly too. Dey tell me deah's a lot ub um
789 wut wuz bring heah an dey ain much good. Duh massuh
wuz fixin tuh tie um up tuh whip um. Dey say, 'Massuh,
567 yuh ain gwine lick me,' an wid dat dey runs down tuh duh ribbuh. Duh obuhseeuh he sho tought he ketch um wen dey git tuh duh ribbuh. But fo he could git tuh um, dey riz up in duh eah an fly way. Dey fly right back tuh Africa. I tink dat happen on Butler Ilun.

825 "I use tuh heah lots ub animal stories, but it bin so long I mos fuhgit bout um. I ain heah much bout duh spiduh cep he is bery wicked an he shahp. He kin spin he tread an riz right up in duh eah widout nuttn tuh hep um. He see a fly an begin tuh spin roun an roun um till he ketch um in he web. Den he caahn git way an An Nancy got um. Das wut duh chillun say tuh dis day wen dey see a spiduh ketch a fly —An Nancy got um.' " "

• 346 On Sunday evening Julius drove us through black swamp and bush to the church at Silver Bluff (Plate XVIII).[A] The little white frame building with yellow light from oil lamps shining through the windows made the night suddenly come
794 alive. Negro men and boys were moving about outside in the darkness and a few were gathered on the steps. All the women and children were inside.

Escorted by Julius and a deacon we went into the church and took our places on the second from the front middle bench. The pulpit stood on the raised platform on which most of the light was concentrated. The men and boys came in. The church was filled with a tense quietness.

793 The preacher came from behind the platform and stood
794 silently behind the pulpit desk, looking dramatically over his congregation. He was tall and spare, with brown skin, narrow face, and a thin pointed beard, a Mohammedan look-
(292) ing Negro. He wore a black skull cap, which we learned later was not ritualistic but was worn to protect his head

A. [See Category 346, plate following p. xxxii-X--Analyst]

2: Jones-Jackson L-5 (1973-1986) 1987
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina

be for that of an elderly person who had acquired many friends and relatives over the years.

The Sea Island churches are the mainstay of the community and are always full of life, vigor, and energy. Many of them have long and illustrious histories. The Hebrew United Presbyterian Church on Johns Island, for example, was organized in 1868 after the white Presbyterian church no longer admitted blacks to worship at its services or in its building. The blacks held services in a bush tent until a new building could be put together out of lumber left on Seabrook and Kiawah beaches by a shipwreck. At the time the island could be reached only by boat, and according to the church historian, the organizing members gathered the wood, put it on a raft, and floated it to the construction site.

Brick Church, located on St. Helena Island, is a Baptist church with an even longer history. It was constructed by slaves for their masters in 1855. In 1862 the slaves, who had been permitted to worship in the balcony, took over the church when the white masters fled the island during the Civil War. Before Penn School (the first normal industrial and agricultural school for the education of blacks in South Carolina) was erected in 1864, the school's founder, Laura Towne, held classes in this church. An elegant two-story structure, Brick Church has been standing firm and serene for more than a century on the grounds of what is now Penn School Center.[53]

The Sea Island church services are lively and enthusiastic. At a good Baptist or African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Sunday morning service, the singing and praising will be audible for many miles. If there is a pianist, drummer, guitarist, or tambourinist, the service is even more energetic. The musical instruments are secondary, however, to the congregation's expressions of joy through handclapping, handshaking, and general rocking and swaying. It is literally impossible to attend these services and not be moved to participate actively. Even the smallest child attempts to move in time to the beat of the songs. The rhythm is also a very important part of the sermons. The minister uses many rhetorical devices to involve his congregation in the service, chief of which is the repetition of words and phrases at the beginning and end of each statement (see Chapter 3). The parishioners are mesmerized by the flow, rhythm, and steady recurrence of the repetitions, and their responses keep the service alive and active.

2: Jones-Jackson L-5 (1973-1986) 1987
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina

•346

Brick Church on St. Helena Island was constructed by slaves. Some of the first classes for former slaves in South Carolina were held here.

[p. 29]

3: Creel H-4 (no date) 1988
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina

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Gullahs worshiping in Goose Creek Church. (Courtesy of the New-York Historical Society, New York.)

[p. ii]

[p. i is blank]

3: Creel H-4 (no date) 1988
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina

bution administered in the name of Christian commandments. Beyond that superintendence, slaveholders spent little energy on Christian doctrine. Planters probably welcomed opportunities to provide slaves with a "safe" outlet for releasing pent-up hostilities and emotions. After 1845, many plantations had rude structures where the Gullahs could "hold prays" on weekday evenings as well as Sundays. Northern missionaries were appalled at the condition of the "Prays" or Praise Houses. "The owner furnished a better stable for his horses than a house of worship for these sons and daughters of the King of Kings," wrote Mansfield French from Port Royal.[44] Yet for Gullahs the Praise House was a plantation community hall where they related secular experiences, directed their religious life, openly expressed among each other their innermost frustrations, longings and expectations.

The white brother in charge of a society was generally a large slaveholder sometimes with several plantations on the Island he superintended. In other cases a Baptist overseer, but slaveholder in his own right, was assigned to a society. The names of Fripp, Chaplin, Barnwell, Baynard, and Fuller dominate Beaufort Church Minutes as "brethren in charge" of black societies. Most of these planters rarely spent long periods of time on their island plantations, preferring the comforts of their Beaufort townhouses. Most knew little about their slaves' activities (except house slaves) unless some depredation was committed and reported. In the early period of church superintendence of societies, white brethren were lax about meeting with the organizations, often leaving this responsibility with the black elders. In 1842 the Beaufort Church Business reminded white brethren of their duties:

> Resolved . . . that *Brother Chaplin be requested to attend himself in person as the Church deems it important that the Brethren appointed and responsible be themselves instructors of the societies confided to them.*

The Church had difficulty retaining a white brother in charge and resignations were frequent. Most Baptists apparently did not want the responsibility of overseeing black church members.[45]

Thus, black societies primarily accommodated the slave membership of large Baptist churches with little or no Christian instruction being imparted by white society leaders. The other sources of exposure to white Christian teachings came from Methodist missionaries, from preaching places established by Richard Fuller (though supplied less rigorously after

3: Creel H-4 (no date) 1988

NN23 Sea Islanders NN23

South Carolina

•346
137

Brick Baptist Church, St. Helena Island, S.C. From the Penn Historical Collection. (Permission granted by Penn Community Services, Inc., St. Helena Island, South Carolina.)

[p. 254]

3: Creel H-4 (no date) 1988
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina

alism. Consequently, religion cannot be viewed only or primarily as a source of visionary, spiritual fulfillment. Nor can religion be mainly viewed as manipulative. For Gullahs it offered a politic for collective consciousness and group conformity within an African-Christian synthesis.

Freedom was not attained as the 1822 conspirators had invisioned. When freedom came, years later, a New rather than Old Testament ideology partly gave meaning and fruition to that liberty. As Leon Litwack points out, few triumphs in the spirit of freedom could equal the day in 1865 when in Charleston, a cornerstone was laid for a new African Methodist Church. It was over forty years after the old wooden structure in Hampstead had been destroyed. The new church was to be built by black hands. The architect was Robert Vesey, son of Denmark.[28] In 1822 freedom under the banner of "A Chosen People" eluded black South Carolinians through no fault of those who made the supreme sacrifice. Yet who could fault the Gullahs and perhaps other African-Americans in 1865, as they regarded themselves if not as a chosen people, at least as the "chosen generation" of a "peculiar people?"

3: Creel H-4 (no date) 1988
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina

middle of a sandy cotton field, with cabins on each side in a row." The first building on the street was the Praise House, a paintless, cheerless-appearing building of boards that "looked as if a heavy gale might lay it low." Some antebellum Praise Houses were equipped with a bell (not to be confused with the driver's horn). Several nights during the week, as well as on Sundays, its welcoming, soothing sound brought the people on "the street" together for assembly. The following description, although a post-Civil War one, could easily fit the antebellum scene:

> . . . soon dark figures moved along those countless little footpaths that intersect the plantation in all directions.
>
> The Praise House filled slowly. It was a small one-roomed cabin that looked weirdly alive as you approached it through the darkness. The numerous cracks in roof and walls gave the outlines of the building sketched in streaks of light against the background of the night.
>
> The room was filled with rough backless benches, and at one end was a little table for the leader. Behind this stood a long bench where several men, officers of the Praise House sat facing the people in motionless silence with half-closed eyes and bowed heads.[1]

Most planters erected these meetinghouses after 1840 to afford the slaves a place for worship and to deprive the inhabitants of various plantations of an opportunity to mingle. Yet the Praise House also offered Gullahs a means to free expression. It was not only a place for religious gathering and spiritual solace but was essential to their community structure. At the Praise House, among fellow slaves, Gullahs publicly professed what they considered a satisfactory spiritual experience, as it was necessary to obtain approval from the Praise House congregation before petitioning the master and the Baptist church for membership. If the religious experience was not inspiring enough, or if the elders and the membership doubted the candidate's sincerity, the individual was not recommended for baptism.[2]

In addition to being a means of bringing conformity and spiritual harmony to the slave quarters, the Praise House was very much like a town hall where members of the plantation gathered, using prayer, song, and exhortation to comfort each other. J. Miller McKim, a Northern observer very much interested in Gullah music, wrote in 1862:

> I asked one of these blacks . . . (Prince Rivers, Sergeant, 1st Reg. S.C.V.)—where they got these songs. "Dey make 'em, sah." "How do they make them?" After a pause, evidently casting about for an explanation, he said: "I'll tell you,

3: Creel H-4 (no date) 1988
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina

35. Cuthbert, *Life of Fuller*, *140–58*; Smith, *In His Image, But*, 133–36, 138–39; King, South Carolina Baptists, 211–12.

36. David Donald, ed., *Inside Lincoln's Cabinet* (New York: Longmans, Green, 1954), 69–70.

37. William Howard Russell, *My Diary North and South*, Fletcher Pratt, ed. (New York: Harper Brothers, 1854), 76–77; Busch, "Beaufort Church," sections entitled "Work among the Negroes," 3 and "Richard Fuller and Slavery," 1; *Minutes, Beaufort Baptist Church*, October 9, 1840, 11, October 8, 1841, 23, October 8, 1842, 39, BC; *Minutes, Euhaw Baptist Church*, October 9, 1836, 59; September 24, 1838, 66, SCL; Cuthbert, *Life of Fuller*, 104–6; C. C. Pinckney to William Capers, January 24, 1835, HSSCC; *SCA*, September 29, 1843; Rawick, *American Slave, South Carolina* II (2) 72–73, 184–85, 279, III (3) 202, 274.

38. *Proceedings of Charleston Meeting*, 49.

39. *Minutes, Beaufort Baptist Church*, "Origin of the Colored Societies," October 7, 1859, Business Meeting in which the organization of the societies is discussed, 271–74, January 7, 1842 and November 11, 1840, 12, BC; Cuthbert, *Life of Fuller*, 83–104; *CAJ*, January 31, 1834; Field to Moore, March 21, 1833, HSSCC.

40. See Chapter 6.

41. *Minutes, Beaufort Baptist Church*, 12, BC.

42. Ibid., 271–72.

43. Ibid., 271–74; Rawick, *American Slave, South Carolina*, II: (2) 185.

44. *Proceedings of Charleston Meeting*, 48–49; *Minutes, Beaufort Baptist Church*, April 9, 1847, 111, passim, BC; Rawick, *American Slave, South Carolina*, II (2) 184–85; Rev. Mansfield French to Revs. Whipple and Jocelyn in Elizabeth Ware Pearson, *Letters from Port Royal* (New York: Arno Press and New York Times, 1969; repr. from 1906 ed.), 20. The spelling generally is *Praise* House. Black and white Northerners living among the Gullahs during the Civil War spelled the word thusly. But Samuel Lawton did research in the Sea Islands in the 1920s and indicates the word was "Prays," named for its function as a place of prayer. According to Lawton, Gullah pronunciation of the flat "a" and dropping of the final syllable on many words explain why no difference was noted between "prays" and "praise." Lawton interviewed former Sea Island slaves in the 1920s who referred to the plantation meetinghouse as "Pray House" without the "s" sound, or they pronounced two syllables very distinctly, "pray-ers house." Informants stated it was "Way ooner go fur pray." Gullahs changed verbs into nouns without adding the extra ending. Thus, at the meetinghouse, "One pray. Den Anudder lead a pray'—Dat make two prays." Lawton's argument is reinforced by Patricia Guthrie's more recent fieldwork in the 1970s. According to Guthrie, "Praise houses are also known locally and in the literature as prayer and pray houses." The Gullahs' mastering of double meaning however may also inform the discussion. They often asked white Northerners to "jine praise wid we." Also their anthem, "New Jerusalem," stated, "Sing God praise both night and day." Thus the Gullahs went to the meetinghouse to *praise* and *pray*. Samuel Lawton, "The Religious Life of Coastal and Sea Island Negroes," (Ph.D. dissertation, George Peabody College for Teachers, 1939), 54–56; Patricia Guthrie, "Praise House Worship and Litigation Among Afro-Americans on a South Carolina Sea Island," Paper, Sixth Annual Martin Luther King Lecture Series, Purdue University, February 21, 1980, 1.

45. Rawick *American Slave, South Carolina* II (2) 279–80, III (3) 200–202; Diary of John Edwin Fripp, 1857–58 and 1865–68, 24, Beaufort Township Library; Russell, *My Diary North and South*, 71–77; Cuthbert, *Life of Fuller*, 15–20; Minutes, *Beaufort Baptist Church*, April 9, 1841, 15, May 14, 1842, 34, BC. August 12, 1843, 61–62; October 1, 1853, 180,

3: Creel H-4 (no date) 1988
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina

15. Berlin, *Freedom: Black Military Experience*, 54–55; Higginson, *Army Life*, 63, 72, 86–105, 149–50; H. G. Spaulding, "Under the Palmetto," *Continental Monthly* 4 (August, 1963): 202–3; Litwack, *Been in the Storm So Long*, 64, 87–93.

16. Higginson, *Army Life*, 46–48, 70–71, 240–41; Spaulding, "Under the Palmetto," 196.

17. Allen Diary, 82–83; Pearson, *Port Royal*, 99, n. 1, 102, 114, 181–82; Charles Nordhoff, "The Freedmen of South Carolina," in Frank Moore, ed., *Papers of the Day* (New York: C. T. Evans, 1863), 4–5; Towne Diary, 14, 21; Botume, *Amongst the Contrabands*, 143–56.

18. Forten, "Sea Islands, Part I, 588.

19. Rupert Holland, ed. *Letters and Diary of Laura M. Towne* (New York: Negro Universities Press, 1969; Cambridge, Mass.: Riverside Press, 1912), 26.

20. Higginson, *Army Life*, 192; Tilden G. Edelstein, *Strange Enthusiasm: A Life of Thomas Wentworth Higginson* (New York: Atheneum, 1970; repr. from 1968 ed.) 257–60.

21. Botume, *Amongst the Contrabands*, 204; Forten, "Sea Islands," Part II, 672; Allen Diary, 164.

22. Botume, *Amongst the Contrabands*, 204.

23. Higginson, *Army Life*, 208.

24. Edelstein, *Strange Enthusiasm*, 257–60 For an enlightening and provoking treatment of "romantic racialism" see George M. Frederickson, *Black Image in the White Mind: The Debate on Afro-American Character and Destiny, 1817–1914* (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), Chapter 4; William Francis Allen, Charles P. Ware, and Lucy M. Garrison, *Slave Songs of the United States* (New York: Peter Smith, 1951; repr. from 1867 ed.), 48; Higginson, *Army Life*, 208–9.

25. Rev. Mansfied French to Revs, Whipple and Jocelyn, n. d., AMA.

26. Higginson, *Army Life*, 233.

27. Ibid., 71, 236–38, and his Appendix D, 267–76.

28. Litwack, *Been in the Storm So Long*, 457.

9. Folk Religion in the Slave Quarters

1. Mrs. William R. Wister, "Recollections of a Southern Plantation and School," Penn School Papers, vol. 5, 19, SHC; Rosa B. Cooley, *School Acres*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1930), 148–49; Diary of Laura M. Towne, 52, Penn School Papers, SHC; "The Long Look," 2–3, undated sketch of a former slave, Sam Polite, who lived to be over 100 years old, Penn School Papers, vol. 1, SHC.

2. *Minutes, Beaufort Baptist Church*, November 11, 1840 and January 7, 1842, 12; October 7, 1859, 271–74, BC; James H. Cuthbert, *Life of Richard Fuller* (New York: Sheldon Co., 1879), 104–5.

3. Cooley, *School Acres*, 148–49; Towne Diary, 52, Samuel Lawton, "The Religious Life of Coastal and Sea Island Negroes," (Ph.D. dissertation, George Peabody College for Teachers, 1939), 61, 69–72; William F. Allen et al., *Slave Songs of the United States* (New York: Peter Smith, 1951; repr. from 1867 ed.) xviii.

4. Thomas J. Woofter, *Black Yeomanry* (New York: Henry Hold, 1930), 243–54; Towne Diary 26, 42; Charlotte Forten, "Life on the Sea Islands," Part II, *Atlantic Monthly* 13 (June, 1864): 672; Edward L. Pierce, "The Negroes at Port Royal, S. C.," Doc. 51 in *Rebellion Record*, ed. Frank Moore, Suppl. 1 (New York: D. Van Nostrand, 1871) 305; Lawton, "Religious Life," 54–57, 60–62; Patricia Guthrie, "Catching Sense: The Meaning

4: Carawan & Carawan B,Z-5 (1959-1988) 1989
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina
Johns Island

Star Hall to travel to other parts of the country to share their songs, in an effort to keep alive some of the older folk material. Each of these projects brought a complex mixture of success and problems and a renewed determination to keep trying.

For generations the Johns Island people were relatively isolated from mainstream America. The low, flat island, covered with tidal creeks and marshes, farmland, and forests of oaks draped with gray Spanish moss, was accessible only by boat until the early part of the century, when bridges and causeways connecting it with the mainland began to be built. Cut off from the mainland, these descendants of cotton plantation slaves retained many aspects of the old slave culture: a regional dialect, Gullah, still marked by distinctly African and Caribbean traits; a large body of folktales, cures, and supernatural beliefs; and a folk version of Christianity with a "shouting" style of singing old spirituals and hymns and a local "praise house" form of worship.

Old and new institutions existed side by side. For many people, Moving Star Hall—a tiny, battered clapboard building—had been the central meeting place for nearly fifty years. It housed a "tend-the-sick" and burial society, a secret lodge, and a community of worship. Here the members could express themselves freely and fully; in the Sunday night worship service each person took a turn preaching, testifying, praying, and raising a song.

Down the road a mile or so is Wesley Methodist Church, where a number of these same people attended regular Sunday services. Here the old folk ways were gradually being replaced by more formal modern practices. Wesley is a fine church with handsome pews, Methodist hymnals, a robed choir, and an organ. On the first Sunday of the month everyone listened to the Reverend G. C. Brown, who came from the mainland in the 1930s with a college degree, and sang hymns and spirituals led by the choir. But on the three Sundays a month when he preached in other churches, the congregation forgot about the organ and the hymnals and sang older spirituals, hymns, and shouts.

(P XII-A)

41 Carawan & Carawan B,Z-5 (1959-1988) 1989
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina
Johns Island

Mrs. Isabel Simmons

ALL JOIN AND MAKE THAT HALL

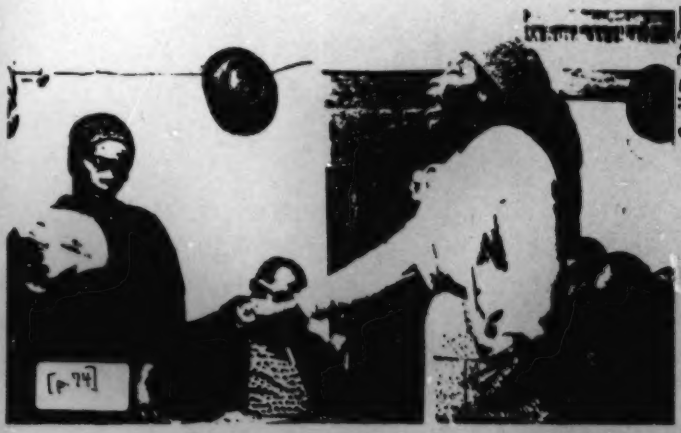
The only time they miss me at that hall, I either sick or off on some church duty. That hall mean a whole lot to me. It give me strength, spirit to carry on. I know everybody who comes. Some is friends, cousins, sisters; some neighbors.

I remember when Moving Star Hall was built, 'round about 1913, '14. Father help build the hall. Mother too. We all throw money until we gets enough to buy the land. All pay seven dollars for the lumber. All join and make that hall. They used to have prayer service in the house--only family then. Afterward, they began to have joint class from house to house. Then when we get the hall, we begin to have meeting there.

My daddy teach we how to sing, teach we how to shout, teach we how to go fast, teach we how to go slow. And then going to meeting, or later going to church, he'll teach we how to behave yourself when we get out to different place, before we leave home.

Used to be plenty people there--all them old people. They sing those old time spiritual, better than how we sing it now. Joe Bligen and Levy Green. Joe Deas was a good singer too, when he was much younger. Had plenty of singing womans, too.

That hall be full of people. Every Sunday. We have meeting in the neighborhood three time a week--Sunday and Tuesday and Thursday night. They keep a meeting going from eight until twelve. Then I get out, tomorrow morning I go on the farm make a day's work, too.



41 Carawan & Carawan B,Z-5 (1959-1988) 1989
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina
Johns Island

Mrs. Alice Wine

A LOT OF PEOPLE MISS IT

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We don't have class meeting in the hall anymore. I miss it. We don't have it now because all these young preachers have everything to the church. What are a few people going to do in a big old church like that? If the people turn out, it never be too large. I like to go to the hall cause you can have your way. You can exercise better. You can feel yourself. You can do the same thing in the church, but the church so big.

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We used to have watch meeting on Christmas night. We turn out in the hall and be there until sunrise. On New Year's, people go all night and be there til New Year roll in. We pray and sing until New Year roll in, then they go to preaching. And about five or six o'clock, then the ladies take over to testify. You don't find that now. Some people can't even say their prayers.

A lot of people miss it. These people is too funny. I can't figure how people could change so fast. Everybody go down to the church. They have watch meeting there, but they don't go but half the night. The hall go until day broad clean. Sometime people shout there until eight or nine o'clock in the morning. We have crowd from all different place—Wadmalaw and Mt. Pleasant and James Island. Ooh man, that hall is packed.

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It's too dangerous now to walk to the hall at night. You don't find nobody walking this road no more. It's not the cars only, people do wicked. People will kill you and knock you down and do all kind of thing with you, no, no. When you see my door shut, it's shut. I don't come out.

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The people don't have no old songs now, the people have new songs. And I don't know one of them. When they start to sing, I just shut my mouth. Nothing but new songs now. Ain't got a taste to it. Ain't got a spirit in it. But when the old people used to start to sing those old songs, and it's time to go to church, man, you run.

491 one-lane affairs, which pass through woods of oak and pine
and marshes filled with cat tails. The church itself is an
346 impressive structure, built by the cooperative labor of the
461 men many years ago, each of whom hauled an allotment of con-
476 crete blocks from the boat landing in ox carts over the
493 deeply rutted sand roads. It was built in a location equally
368 distant from the "four corners" which were populated at that
time, and faces due east. Preceding the major morning ser-
794 mon, three Sunday-school classes are held simultaneously in
the church sanctuary, with oral reading and discussion of a
printed lesson a major component of the lessons for all age
796 groups. Formal preaching is held one Sunday each month, with
793 morning and evening services conducted by a well-educated
794 minister who comes from Georgetown. On other Sundays, ser-
vices are conducted by church members. The most prestigious
794 social group on the island is that of the Board of Deacons
511 of the church; this small group of six or seven of the oldest
men conducts the major business of the island. Other busi-
595 ness is conducted by two women's clubs or "lodges," which
often meet on Sunday afternoons in the abandoned schoolhouse.
Other social activities are parties, adult education classes,
527 music and dancing, and story telling. Community parties
873 are sometimes held in the old school building, and adult
education classes have been conducted there as well. Music
533 is a highly valued activity in every age group, as evidenced
535 both by the singing for Sunday services and by the dancing

8: Smith Q-4,5 (no date) 1926
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina

192 but Mr. Gonzales sees in it an onomatopoetic origin, deriving it from the whispering frou-frou of silken petticoats."

Gwinin' en' gwinin', goings-on and goings-on.

Trus'-me-Gawd (I trust my God), the appropriate name for the cranky, easily-overturned dugout canoe.

Praise-meetin', prayer meeting."

Fuh sowl, a strong phrase, for true, for truth: "'Ee fat fuh sowl."

'Ent wut' (isn't, aren't worth), in the general sense of worthless, of no account: "Him ent wut'."

Mo' bettuh, mo' longuh, double comparative for better and longer.

Mores', most.

To cut de green calabash, to exaggerate, to draw the long bow (calabash is a gourd).

To pull wool, to grasp the small twisted forelock and to bow.

Bline Gawd, blind God, personal idol or fetich.

Fin'lly at las', a full phrase for at last.

Juntleman (gentleman), used for the regular and lawful husband, and similarly, *lawfully lady*, for a Negro's legally-married wife, in both cases "Withouten oother compaignye in youth," as Chaucer said.

Tek um an' tanky, (Take it [or them] and thank you), I took it gladly and was (am) grateful.

Dat buckra (or *nigguh*) *eye bigger dan 'e belly*, (i.e., he wants more than he should, is greedy).

Fuh gone hook-han', To walk arm in arm.

Lay down yo' mammy haa't (heart) *an' tek up yo' daddy*, have courage, be a man.

Clap-hat-bitch, a woman sudden and hasty in speech and deed, a virago.

A swinge (singed) *cat, an ash cat*, of wretched, ill-seeming, unprepossessing appearance.

Concerning a safety-match, which would strike nowhere except on the box, a darkey was heard to remark, "Mas

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"*The Black Border*, p. 284.

"Mrs. Parsons notes that on St. Helena Island, the little cabin churches are called "praise-houses." *Folk-Lore of the Sea Islands, etc.*, p. 206.

[346]

9: Parrish B-4,5 (ca.1916-1941) 1942
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
Georgia
St. Simon's Island

114
•346
291

13. The Author and Suyanna in Front of the School-House

[facing p. 81]

9: Parrish B-4,5 (ca.1916-1941) 1942
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
Georgia
St. Simon's Island

533
539

Lord called Jonah t' Nineveh Lan'
To preach the gospel in de terrible d'man'
Jonah risen an' 'e went on down de Joppa two years started over
yonda to Tarsha two years to wait 'pon God's comman'
Got on the ship went down to de lowermos' deck
The cap'n of de ship started to sail
Got in de midst o' de middle o' de deep
The cap'n of de ship got de trouble in min'
Search the ship from bow t' stern
The' foun' ole Jonah fast asleep
Wake up . . .

The last two lines, which ended with "tell you now," I could not get. These were followed by the chorus. Further vicissitudes of Jonah were related in two more long verses.

AN' HE NEVER SAID A MUMBLIN' WORD

123
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346
352

Last Easter I attended service, by special request, at a makeshift Baptist "tabernacle" far from the highway, in the pine wilderness of Camden County. There was a roof over a part of the one-story shack, but it lacked sides except behind the pulpit. The benches were planks on blocks of wood, and pine slabs were put on the swampy ground to keep our feet dry. In his sermon the minister pointedly stressed the fact that spiritual comfort was infinitely to be preferred over that of the flesh. His earnestness and conviction in describing Christ's appearance before Pilate, and the fortitude with which He bore His sufferings, made the scene too vivid for Phyllis, who became excited, jumped from her seat, and shrieked: "He didn't do nothin'! No He didn't! He was an innocent man! Yes He was!" She was in truth a modern witness for my Lord.

796
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53

See how they done my Lord
done my Lord
done my Lord
See how they done my Lord
An' He never said a mumblin' word.

11: Johnson H-4,5 (no date) 1930
(1525-ca. 1880)
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina
St. Helena Island

Colored Persons was published in Savannah in 1837. These are only two of many such works published in the South.

The Missionary Society of the South Carolina Conference of the Methodist denomination collected for their missions to the Negroes between twelve and fifteen hundred dollars in 1837 and in 1840 reported nineteen missionaries, thirteen missions, 232 plantations administered unto, 5,482 members, and 3,811 children.[48] Very little data can be obtained concerning the activities of the Baptist denomination among the sea-island Negroes, although it is known that more of them adhered to the Baptist faith than to any other. In the summer of 1838 a revival of religion commenced among the Negroes of Liberty County, Georgia, and spread throughout the entire coastal region of South Carolina and Georgia, continuing for two years. During that time the Congregational Church in Liberty County and the Baptist churches throughout the region greatly added to their colored membership.[49]

In addition to the space reserved for slaves in the rear and in the gallery of "Brick Church" on St. Helena Island, practically every plantation had its own "praise house" where the people held their weekly services. In case the planter provided no separate building, services were held in the cabin of the religious leader. Miss Towne wrote to a friend shortly after she reached St. Helena Island in 1862 that the praise house was "always the cabin of the oldest person in the village of negro houses."[50] She was

[48] Charles C. Jones, *The Religious Instruction of the Negroes in the United States*, pp. 82, 83.
[49] *Ibid.*, p. 83.
[50] *Letters and Diary of Laura M. Towne*, p. 20.

11: Johnson H-4,5 (no date) 1930
(1525-ca. 1880)
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina
St. Helena Island

346.

A ST. HELENA ISLAND PRAISE HOUSE

[facing p. 148]

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11: Johnson H-4,5 (no date) 1930
(1525-ca. 1880)
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina
St. Helena Island

567
.346

doubtless speaking from a knowledge only of the plantation where she was then residing, for her co-workers have left descriptions of various praise houses on the Island. W. C. Gannett wrote in April, 1862, that the praise house on Pine Grove plantation was "quite a nice little house,—the best on this part of the island."[81] The praise house of Eustis plantation on Ladies Island which their mistress, then living in Massachusetts, had built them was a church indeed.[82]

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Once, twice, or even three times a week, those who were religiously inclined met at the praise house to sing, pray, and exhort. Edward L. Pierce estimated that about half of the adult Negroes on St. Helena were members of a church.[83] The praise meeting usually opened with a "sperichil" followed by a hymn which the leader "deaconed out" two lines at a time, reading from a well-worn psalm book, if perchance he had learned to read, pretending to read, nevertheless, holding the book nearer the flickering light as if to make out the words, all the while calling out the lines from memory. Cuffy, the leader of the praise house on Pine Grove plantation, always made his own hymns, improvised from hymns of the whites, "praying to de Lord Jedus teach um as he in de woods [to] jine one word 'ginst t'oder."[84] After another hymn and perhaps a spiritual, the leader would ask for a prayer, then

(782)

[81] *Letters from Port Royal*, p. 20 n.

[82] See also Wm. Henry Trescot, "Address on Gen. Stephen Elliott, delivered in the House of Representatives of South Carolina, Sept. 8, 1866," p. 5. For many years preceding the War, Rev. Stephen Elliott, father of General Elliott, of Beaufort, "had declined the rectorship of a regular congregation, and, having built a church upon his own plantation, preached regularly and most efficiently to the slaves of the neighborhood."

[83] Pierce, "Report," *Rebellion Record*, sup., I., 305.

[84] *Letters from Port Royal*, p. 27.

11: Johnson H-4,5 (no date) 1930
(1525-ca. 1880)
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina
St. Helena Island

175 837 684 had gone away with her and "married." She had begged him to return and so he did, but after a few months he had gone off again to live with the other wife down the road a few tasks away. He was in the meeting-house yonder, a prayin' now.[24]

175 178 592 (848) After Reconstruction, one heard fewer of such stories on St. Helena, for the church officials attempted to discipline all offenders. Although there were fewer cases of desertion, illegitimacy was none the less frequent despite the "churching." The significant change in family life was the elevated status of the husband. In attempting to stabilize family life, the superintendents and teachers had appealed to the man as the head of the family and had urged him to assume his rightful responsibilities. Black men who had been accustomed to the dominance of women during slavery came now to warn their wives to keep their places. The land which they bought from the Government was in their own names and they came to look upon the house as theirs, not that of their wives as in slavery days.

(423)

175 • 346 Freedom brought few changes in the religious life of the people. They still clung to their plantation praise houses, but instead of one praise house to a plantation they occasionally had as many as two or three. Besides this they built a few new churches, for "Brick Church" was too near Ladies Island to be within convenient reach of all the Islanders. But their church forms they changed [illegible] except to make the praise house leaders subject [illegible] Negro preachers of their churches whereas during antebellum days they had been subject to the white ministers.

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[24] See Reid, *After the War*, p. 106n.